

County fiscal office sets dress code for workers in downtown building

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The Cuyahoga County Administration Building is about to look a whole lot spiffier.

Starting Monday, men who work in the fiscal office must wear ties. Women have more options, but they're limited to dresses, or blouses or sweaters with slacks, skirts or dressy capris.

Banned: Jeans, shorts (and, therefore, jean shorts), T-shirts, miniskirts and flip-flops — as well as visible tattoos and facial piercings.

The dress code is the innovation of county Fiscal Officer Wade Steen, who wears a suit to work and was taken aback by the free-for-all of outfits he saw when he started at the county last month.

"It shows a measure of respect

for the taxpayers," said Steen. "They're coming down to conduct important business. . . . The last thing you want to do is show up and see someone who's there to serve you and who just looks shabby."

For now, the rules do not apply to members of the staff of the county executive and council, who also work in the building. But those employees generally comply with

the new rules.

The fiscal office, under the county charter, combines the former treasurer, auditor, recorder and budget offices, as well as the boards of revision and the nonjudicial side of the clerk of courts office.

Eventually the standards may spread countywide, said Executive Ed FitzGerald, who also wears a suit to work.

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Dress code in effect Monday

Employees may still wear jeans, sweatshirts and running shoes on special dress-down days, according to the code. But on regular work days, employees who don't meet standards will have to correct their attire and have their pay docked if they leave work to change. Repeated violations could lead to firing.

The move is one step in FitzGerald's quest to make county government more customer-friendly.

For the first time, the county is

working with KeyBank to allow people to make property tax payments, in cash or check, at the bank's 60 branches. County title offices will also have drop boxes for payments, so that taxpayers don't have to drive and park downtown.

The county also is training its employees to be more courteous to people who come to the downtown administration building to pay taxes, file a deed or pay for a dog license. And FitzGerald is disciplining employees who aren't polite; one person was fired last month.

"This is a new era in Cuyahoga County government," Steen said. "The county executive is making important changes. The mindset has changed, and this is part of it."